

SN. 10/669,899

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IN THE CLAIMS

*The status of the claims as presently amended is as follows:*

1. *(Currently Amended)* An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a predetermined tab sheet bundle, comprising:

a first sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the predetermined tab sheet bundle to an image transfer position via a first conveying path that conveys the tab sheet with the tab sheet being inverted;

a second sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the predetermined tab sheet bundle to the image transfer position via a second conveying path that conveys the tab sheet without the tab sheet being inverted;

a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the predetermined tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the predetermined tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a page order-designating device that designates page order of tab sheets fed from said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device;

a storage device that stores sheet management information indicating the page order designated for said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device by said page order-designating device in correlation with said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device;

a tab sheet feed-instructing device that instructs feeding of the tab sheets; and

a controller responsive to instruction of feeding of the tab sheets by said tab sheet feed-instructing device, for providing control to automatically select said first sheet feed device or said second sheet feed device that can feed tab sheets that enable a valid image transfer result to be obtained, according to a sheet discharge destination selected by a user for said first sheet discharge device or said second sheet discharge device and the page order designated for said first sheet feed device or said second sheet feed device, indicated by the sheet management information.

2. *(Currently Amended)* An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a predetermined tab sheet bundle, comprising:

a first sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the predetermined tab sheet bundle to an image transfer position via a first conveying path that conveys the tab sheet with the tab sheet being inverted;

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a second sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the predetermined tab sheet bundle to the image transfer position via a second conveying path that conveys the tab sheet without the tab sheet being inverted;

a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the predetermined tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the predetermined tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a page order-designating device that designates whether type of sheets fed from said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device is a type other than a tab sheet or the tab sheet, and designates page order thereof if the designated type is the tab sheet;

a storage device that stores sheet management information indicating the type and page order designated for said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device by said page order-designating device in correlation with said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device;

a tab sheet feed-instructing device that instructs feeding of the tab sheets; and

a controller responsive to instruction of feeding of the tab sheets by said tab sheet feed-instructing device, for providing control to automatically select said first sheet feed device or said second sheet feed device that can feed tab sheets that enable a valid image transfer result to be obtained, according to a sheet discharge destination selected by a user for said first sheet discharge device or said second sheet discharge device and the page order designated for said first sheet feed device or said second sheet feed device, indicated by the sheet management information.

3. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a tab sheet bundle set in a normal order or a reverse order, comprising:

a first sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to an image transfer position via a first conveying path that conveys the tab sheet with the tab sheet being inverted;

a second sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to the image transfer position via a second conveying path that conveys the tab sheet without the tab sheet being inverted;

a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

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a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a sheet discharge device-selecting device that selects said first sheet discharge device or said second sheet discharge device;

a managing device that manages information as to whether a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order or in the reverse order in said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device; and

a controller responsive to selection of said first sheet discharge device, for providing control to select said first sheet feed device in which a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order or said second sheet feed device in which a tab sheet bundle is set in the reverse order.

4. *(Currently Amended)* An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a tab sheet bundle set in a normal order or a reverse order, comprising:

a first sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to an image transfer position via a first conveying path that conveys the tab sheet with the tab sheet being inverted;

a second sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to the image transfer position via a second conveying path that conveys the tab sheet without the tab sheet being inverted;

a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a sheet discharge device-selecting device that selects said first sheet discharge device or said second sheet discharge device;

a managing device that manages information as to whether a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order or in the reverse order in said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device; and

a controller responsive to selection of said second sheet discharge device, for providing control to select said first sheet feed device in which a tab sheet bundle is set in the reverse order or said second sheet feed device in which a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order.

5. *(Currently Amended)* An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a tab sheet bundle set in a normal order or a reverse order, comprising:

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a first sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to an image transfer position via a first conveying path that conveys the tab sheet with the tab sheet being inverted;

a second sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to the image transfer position via a second conveying path that conveys the tab sheet without the tab sheet being inverted;

a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a tab sheet feed-instructing device that instructs feeding of the tab sheets;

a selection device that selects said first sheet feed device or said second sheet feed device;

a managing device that manages information as to whether a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order or in the reverse order in said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device; and

a controller responsive to selection of said first sheet feed device in which a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order, for providing control to select said first sheet discharge device.

6. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a tab sheet bundle set in a normal order or a reverse order, comprising:

a first sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to an image transfer position via a first conveying path that conveys the tab sheet with the tab sheet being inverted;

a second sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to the image transfer position via a second conveying path that conveys the tab sheet without the tab sheet being inverted;

a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a tab sheet feed-instructing device that instructs feeding of the tab sheets;

a selection device that selects said first sheet feed device or said second sheet feed device;

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a managing device that manages information as to whether a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order or in the reverse order in said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device; and

a controller responsive to selection of said first sheet feed device in which a tab sheet bundle is set in the reverse order, for providing control to select said second sheet discharge device.

7. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a tab sheet bundle set in a normal order or a reverse order, comprising:

a first sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to an image transfer position via a first conveying path that conveys the tab sheet with the tab sheet being inverted;

a second sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to the image transfer position via a second conveying path that conveys the tab sheet without the tab sheet being inverted;

a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a selection device that selects said first sheet feed device or said second sheet feed device;

a managing device that manages information as to whether a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order or in the reverse order in said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device; and

a controller responsive to selection of said second sheet feed device in which a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order, for providing control to select said second sheet discharge device.

8. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a tab sheet bundle set in a normal order or a reverse order, comprising:

a first sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to an image transfer position via a first conveying path that conveys the tab sheet with the tab sheet being inverted;

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a second sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to the image transfer position via a second conveying path that conveys the tab sheet without the tab sheet being inverted;

a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a selection device that selects said first sheet feed device or said second sheet feed device;

a managing device that manages information as to whether a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order or in the reverse order in said first sheet feed device and said second sheet feed device; and

a controller responsive to selection of said second sheet feed device in which a tab sheet bundle is set in the reverse order, for providing control to select said first sheet discharge device.

9. *(Currently Amended)* An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a tab sheet bundle set in a normal order or a reverse order, comprising:

a sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to an image transfer portion via a conveying path that conveys the tab sheet with the tab sheet being inverted;

a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a managing device that manages information as to whether a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order or in the reverse order in said sheet feed device; and

a controller that provides control to cause said first sheet discharge device to discharge each tab sheet of a tab sheet bundle set in said sheet feed device in the case where the tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order in said sheet feed device.

10. *(Currently Amended)* An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a tab sheet bundle set in a normal order or a reverse order, comprising:

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a sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to an image transfer portion via a conveying path that conveys the tab sheet with the tab sheet being inverted;

a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a managing device that manages information as to whether a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order or in the reverse order in said sheet feed device; and

a controller that provides control to cause said second sheet discharge device to discharge each tab sheet of a tab sheet bundle set in said sheet feed device in the case where the tab sheet bundle is set in the reverse order in said sheet feed device.

11. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a tab sheet bundle set in a normal order or a reverse order, comprising:

a sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to an image transfer position via a conveying path that conveys the tab sheet without the tab sheet being inverted;

a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a managing device that manages information as to whether a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order or in the reverse order in said sheet feed device; and

a controller that provides control to cause said second sheet discharge device to discharge each tab sheet of a tab sheet bundle set in said sheet feed device in the case where the tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order in said sheet feed device.

12. (*Currently Amended*) An image forming apparatus capable of sequentially feeding tab sheets of a tab sheet bundle set in a normal order or a reverse order, comprising:

a sheet feed device that feeds each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle to an image transfer portion via a conveying path that conveys the tab sheet without the tab sheet being inverted;

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a first sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-up state to a first sheet discharge tray;

a second sheet discharge device that discharges each of the tab sheets of the tab sheet bundle in a face-down state to a second sheet discharge tray;

a managing device that manages information as to whether a tab sheet bundle is set in the normal order or in the reverse order in said sheet feed device; and

a controller that provides control to cause said first sheet discharge device to discharge each tab sheet of a tab sheet bundle set in said sheet feed device in the case where the tab sheet bundle is set in the reverse order in said sheet feed device.